THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. I. January 10, 1936 Tebet 15, 5696 No. 18

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A Piyut

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EDITORIALS

The Panacea Complex

THE American Committee for the Settlement of Jews in Birobidjan, in collaboration with Komzet, the department of the Soviet government in charge of Jewish settlement work, has announced plans for a campaign to raise $500,000 to aid Polish, German and other non-Russian Jews to settle in the recently created autonomous territory. It is expected that during 1936, 1000 non-Russian families will be admitted to the new territory. Zionists are naturally agitated by this move; the advocates of the Birobidjan project evidently mean business, and Zionists are debating whether or not to oppose them. Their opposition would derive from the fear that Birobidjan might constitute a serious competitor to Palestine for the moral and material support of west-European and American Jews.

Let us examine carefully just what are the issues involved. The Jews of Germany and of Eastern Europe are in desperate straits. There seems to be no prospect of improvement; on the contrary, each week finds them crushed more and more mercilessly. They must be transported to other lands; as many as possible must be salvaged. Where shall they go? The one country that has been able to absorb new immigrants is Palestine. During the year just ended, more than 60,000 Jews have entered the country, and if we are to judge by this record, Palestine may be able to absorb another 200,000 in the next four years. This presupposes that nothing will happen to retard the current rate of immigration. We are still faced with the problem of transporting more than a million Jews to other lands. Statistics recently released indicate that, although more than 50 per cent of the German Jews are too old to emigrate, about 294,000 of them can and must be removed; and in Poland, reports indicate that at least one million Jews have to go elsewhere.

Now Jews are offered a haven in Birobidjan. The Soviet government, we are told, is prepared to spend hundreds of millions of rubles to make the land suitable for habitation. On what possible grounds can we, or dare we object to taking advantage of this opportunity? It cannot reasonably be maintained that Birobidjan will compete with Palestine for immigrants, because, in the first place, Birobidjan is at present able to obsorb no more than 1000 families a year from among non-Russian Jews; (we assume that Russian Jews need not move from one part of Russia to another unless they desire to do so, and in that case, such removal does not involve an obligation on the part of diaspora Jewry). Certainly, there are more homeless Jews than Palestine and Birobidjan together can absorb. It might be contended that the Jews who go to Birobidjan will not be permitted to

live as Jews in accordance with their religious scruples. This is to a great extent true; but we do not know what the future may bring. The realistic approach of the U.S.S.R. to its problems precludes no possibilities. The consensus of opinion seems to be that, if and when sufficient security is achieved in internal affairs, and in foreign relations, the Soviet government may relent on many of its harsh decrees. We cannot deprive Jews of the chance of the immediate amelioration of their physical status because of the present attitude of the Russian government toward questions of religion.

The argument has been advanced that Birobidjan is not safe; that it lies in the path of an invading army from Japan; that it will form the battleground, at some future time, of a conflict between the U.S.S.R. and Japan. It has even been said that the Russians are populating Birobidjan with Jews in order to use them as a buffer, to absorb the immediate shock of invasion. If this point is intended as an argument in favor of Palestine, it is unfortunately a poor one. Are we guaranteed that Palestine is free from similar dangers? If we wish to indulge in doleful speculations, we might just as well imagine an Arab uprising that would dwarf the riots of 1929. We might picture Palestine as the battleground on which will be fought the war for the supremacy of the Mediterranean in the future, as it always was in the past. And have we the right to assume that the British will defend the Jews in Palestine more zealously than the Red Army will defend Birobidjan?

The fact is that the disposition to pit Palestine against Birobidjan is a false and dangerous one. We Jews cannot afford, at this stage of our problem, to think in terms of any one territory. It is true that we must think in terms of Palestine as central to all Jewish territorial movements, because Palestine gives us promise of a future for Jewish civilization. In Palestine alone can Judaism really be creative again; in Palestine the Jews of the world have the symbol of their will to live as a people and to develop as a cultural entity. But it is equally true that we should not think in terms of Palestine *alone* for the solution of the Jewish problem. The objection to Birobidjan should be, not that it has these disadvantages or those, but that it is not enough. The Jews of the world must have a group of territories where they will be able to live in concentrated groups, where a maximum degree of security can be achieved, and where they will be enabled to live a normal economic life.

We should not fall victim to that "panacea complex" which enervates every worthwhile idea, which maintains the "either or" attitude, and which deprecates all solutions but one. Like every important problem, the problem of Jewish settlement should not be oversimplified. Zionists must be warned against discouraging any other project for rebuilding the lives of Jews; and the advocates of the Birobidjan project must understand that they serve no good purpose in constantly minimizing the values of Palestine. As a matter of fact, even if they merged their forces, they would still present an inadequate program. The Jews of the world today must begin to plan on a larger scale, for the acquisition of other territories in addition to those two. They should come with the demand that our people be saved to whatever international agencies can be of help. The nations cannot wipe us off the face of the earth. If they cannot assimilate us, they must provide some place for us to go.

Jewish Exploitation for Jewish Ends

EXPLOITATION is an ugly phenomenon in whatever form it appears. It involves the use of a commodity or a service without recognition on the part of the user of his full responsibility to those who create that commodity or offer that service. But does the policy of exploitation become any the more honorable when

it is directed toward some worthwhile end? This question is by no means academic. We raise it only because it obtrudes itself constantly in Jewish life.

American Jewry is possessed of an abundance of Jewish organizations which range in scope from the national, such as community centers and federations, all the way to sub-communal hospitals, homes for the aged and orphan asylums — in brief, a multiplicity too large to be enumerated in detail. Each of these is devoted to some specific Jewish purpose. Each is supported by a special group of sympathizers. Many of these organizations are concerned entirely with fund raising, others are interested in cultural activities as well. But both alike experience from time to time the necessity of calling upon other Jewish organizations. There are meetings to be held and a meeting place is indispensable. A program must be prepared. One requires that a cantor offer musical numbers or that a rabbi or educator deliver a lecture. Almost invariably these organizations feel that they are entitled to the services of the institutions or the individuals upon whom they call without assuming any obligation in return. For are they not engaged in Jewish causes? Do not synagogues and Jewish centers exist to further Jewish life? Are not rabbis, educators and cantors dedicated to the advancement of the Jewish cause? Thus it comes to pass that almost every Jewish organization has become an exploiter of some other Jewish organization or of Jewish personalities.

The extent of this irresponsible exploitation for worthwhile Jewish ends can best be illustrated in the experience of synagogues and rabbis. The synagogue auditorium is used, the rabbi speaks, the meeting adjourns, the members of the organization disperse, and none of them feels any responsibility toward the maintenance of the synagogue or its personnel. It is assumed that the synagogue will be there when next the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Bikur Holim Hospital wishes to meet and that the rabbi and cantor will be available to supply a program.

It is not our contention that each individual cause does not have merit. Our protest is directed against that attitude toward Jewish life which sees only the fragments and not the whole. American Jewry is an organism. No one cause can flourish unless the supporters of that cause support the whole of Jewish life. Hadassah work in Palestine, J. D. C. enterprises in Europe depend in great measure upon the assistance rendered by other Jewish institutions and by Jewish persons professionally engaged in Jewish work. We wish to remind the members of individual organizations that they owe a responsibility to Jewish causes outside their specific interests. No one has fulfilled his Jewish obligations by becoming a member of the Zionist group and listening to a lecture by a Jewish educator until he has given his full support to the institution which maintains that educator. Ultimately this whole issue points once again to the need of a planned Jewish community in which an organized Jewry shall collectively support and maintain individual Jewish causes. Under those circumstances a rabbi or educator as one limb of that community could honorably be called upon to assist some other. But until that condition in American Jewish life is obtained, rabbis, educators, synagogues and community centers are being used irresponsibly. In brief, they are being exploited. Any person of ethical sensitivity will recognize that fact and will undertake to identify himself not with one isolated Jewish cause but also with those other causes which give aid and comfort to that which is closest to him.

The Problem of The Hitler-Proselyte

By Jacob *B.* Agushewitz*

EVERY nation has its "Forgotten Men." The Jewish people, it seems to me, is unique in counting among its own a considerable and rapidly growing group of people to whom the epithet "forgotten" can be doubly applied, for they have forgotten their people even as Jewish leaders have forgotten them. I refer of course to those Jews who only recently and very timidly joined our ranks, roused to a realization of their own identity through the advent of the Nazis to power—the "Hitler proselytes."

One can recognize these Jews not only by their antecedents, but almost as infallibly by their reaction to Jewish affairs. Lacking an affirmative response to Judaism, having been pushed to us but not pulled by us, these people view themselves and us through the same glasses as our enemies, self-pityingly tinted, no doubt, but basically those of our foes. They regard the Jewish people as unfortunate, condemned by blind historic forces to suffer senselessly, stupidly, like a weak dwarf stumbling under the feet of drunken rowdies. Naturally, they are deeply depressed by this view. When one suffers for a noble cause, then the most bitter cup of poison contains an overtaste of sweetness in it, but goalless, causeless pain is blackness entire.

They are obsessed with the feeling of not belonging anywhere, like those cold naked souls of sinners that float eternally between heaven and hell. Their attempts to ignore or escape Judaism have been frustrated. They would like to find themselves as Jews, but they do not know how, nor at times even why, nor what it is all about. They feel as if an alien mask were clamped upon their faces which henceforth was to be their countenance, but they have not yet managed to connect it with their blood vessels, their nerves of pain and pleasure. Thus, these Jews are a problem to themselves. To Judaism their presence is an unequalled opportunity to prove its worth and to strengthen itself through the addition of new forces. It is a glorious chance for a vital Judaism to stage a comeback and to regain the most significant position "in the eyes of all the Jews." It is with the hope of focusing attention on this problem that the following lines are indited.

In the last resort the attitude of these Jews reduces itself to the following conclusion. We can neither escape nor ignore our Jewishness. Therefore, we must take an affirmative attitude toward Jewish life. We shall live as Jews.

But, here the question arises, what is meant by the phrases "Jewish life" or "live as Jews." For an answer to this query, our repentant brethren turn, rightly enough, to the various proponents of Judaism.

It is needless to dwell on the babel of opinions, ranging from hidebound fundamentalism to downright communism, that they encounter. Suffice it briefly to indicate that they cannot agree with those who base Jewish life primarily on the acceptance of definite creeds or on the belief of a revealed code for they, being for the most part trained in the age of science, accept as true only the verified conclusions and plausible assumptions of modern science; that in the programs of "Nationalist Jews," they recognize beneath gabardine, *talit* and *yarmulka* the age old Nemesis of their people and—all things considered—the greatest enemy of civilization; that generally they find irrelevant the arguments of those who attenuate Judaism into a fight against fascism, a kind of sublimation rather than a normalized release of energy, for by no stretch of logic can Jewishness and anti-fascism be rendered identical.

In the last quarter of a century, there

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has indeed arisen a movement, vague and amorphous at first but fully articulate by now, which seems to offer the very answer that our friends are so painfully in need of. I refer to the Jewish Culturists who tell him in effect, "You find that a past 3000 years old is a social force that cannot be ignored; history is too much with us. You want to affirm yourself as a Jew and live a Jewish life. Very well, you are an adherent of our creed little as you may be aware of it. We think of Judaism as a civilization, as the common life of the Jewish people. To us the ancient sentiment of 'among my people I sit' is the sole basis of Judaism. Since you share this feeling, you start with our premise and must therefore, with the proper intellectual guidance, tread with us the several ramifications of Jewish civilization: join the local, national and world Jewish organizations, work for the rehabilitation of the Jewish people, cultivate a love for Palestine and a sympathetic receptivity to its future culture, observe the Jewish folkways and give your children a Jewish education."

Plausible as this argument may sound, our *Baale-t'shuva,* I believe, will remain bewildered and unconvinced. They may not be able to formulate clear cut objections to this conception of Judaism. They are unmoved by these persuasions. Probably, the more self critical among them would reply thus, "Your argument, though true for you and such as you who have, from their infancy, been brought up in Jewish culture, is totally unconvincing to me for, strictly speaking. I have no desire to live a Jewish life—a sentiment which conditions the acceptance of your program. Rather, I desire to desire to live in the Jewish civilization. The poignancy of my problem consists in the lack of an inner urge to associate with my brethren. I do so only because of an outer compulsion; from the bottom of my heart, I resent this fact. I hate to have the prejudices of others determine my life. I despise myself for the thought, whose truth I cannot dispute, that I participate in Jewish activities only because of the pressure of the non-Jewish environment; that in fact I respond to the wishes of my tormentors even while and because they scorn me; that my Judaism is but the unhappy fruit begotten of the vile seeds of blind prejudice, and nourished by the swampy waters of bigotry. I want you to arouse within me a sense of inward attachment to Jewish values, that I may know them as, in a sense, my own creations. But, when you tell me to participate in Jewish civilization because I cannot successfully accept the other two alternatives of escaping or ignoring it, you still base Judaism for me on external hostility. The river of my soul, if it is to be my own soul, can flow along Jewish channels only when it wells out of the springs of my own conscience, my own sense of duty and values. Help me, if you can, to answer in terms of my own values, why I should be a Jew? Your program though inwardly consistent is totally nontransferable to me for the idea upon which it is based does not evoke within me a sense of duty for the continuation of Jewish life. The fact that certain practices were observed by my ancestors does not in itself obligate me to do likewise. Nor can the fact of their being observed at present by a considerable part of our people arouse within me any more than a sentimental curiosity or a vague wistfulness akin to the wish that grown people sometimes have of reverting to the simple joys of childhood—an attitude which can never be translated into action for any length of time."

The justice of this reply can hardly be doubted. Unless we subscribe to the racial view of culture, the term civilization must be considered as a plea valid only for those who have grown up under its auspices and have never ventured to question its authority.

Thus, while it is true that Judaism may be defined as an all-inclusive civilization, we do not gain from that intellectual feat any further insight into the most crucial problem of modern Judaism, to wit: the

proof of its indispensability in the life of a modern Jew. Nor is this proof necessary for the "Hitler-proselytes" only. I have chosen this type because they represent in exaggerated proportions the "Hitler Complex" prevailing in varying degrees among the major part of our people. Scarcely a Jew can be found in pulpit or pew who will not buttress his faith in Judaism by reference to the Nazi atrocities—though God only knows what those unfortunate events really prove. External pressure is a powerful factor in the preservation of Judaism; yet, by itself—lacking an inner interpretation, it is miserably insufficient.

It must be recognized that Judaism is placed differently from other civilizations. Since the days of our patriarch Jacob, when "God folded up under his head the whole length and breadth of Palestine," it has remained true that most every nation walked on its land—just naturally, following the line of least resistance; whereas, the Jewish people hung on to it by intellectual forces. The civilization of almost every other people is like a pyramid resting on its base; Judaism is like an inverted pyramid—matter resting upon mind—and can be held in equilibrium, like a spinning top, only through the rotating forces of a powerful motive. The ancient forces that have kept the Jewish structure stable for centuries have become deflected and all but lost in the stream of modernity. A revitalization and redirection of the old motive is the primary need. All attempts to render Jewish civilization "intrinsically interesting" are insufficient, though praiseworthy. In the first place, public interest is notoriously fickle; it feeds on newness. In the second place, the pleasure derivable from the observance of Jewish practices is traceable, in its specific aspects, to group sanction—but, group sanction itself must rest on the firm foundation of duty.

Any Jewish program that disregards this fact and spends itself in instructions to redecorate and remodel the inverted pyramid of Judaism fails in its foremost purpose.

Here is a task for Jewish leadership to ponder and, as I hope, resolve.

II

The following considerations reveal in brief outline how the ideals and customs of traditional Judaism, remaining fully significant and vital, may be carried over to even completely dejudaized Jews.

1. Religion shall remain, as it has ever been in the past, the primary motive in Judaism, the Atlas of the Jewish world. In order to be capable of general acceptance, religion shall be understood as Torah, directions for a way of life, embarked upon for its inherent virtue in sanctifying the lives of men. No belief in a sudden transcendental revelation is, therefore, absolutely necessary for the acceptance of a Jewish religious life.

2. Even in this form, religion appeals powerfully to a sense of duty—a fact which reveals at once its superiority above the term civilization. People feel obligated to be religious, though they do not as a rule feel that they owe allegiance to a particular civilization. Nor is religious duty necessarily based on the disputed claim of religion being an indispensable guaranty of the ethical life. Rather our sense of duty is the ultimate source out of which both ethics and religion flow in parallel directions.

3. The function of religion is to assist man in rising above the standards of animal life. It strives to attain this goal in the first place, through a discipline which keeps the person ever mindful of his duties and, in the second place, through focusing one's attention selectively on significant events of both past and present—a reminder which tends to fortify man's faith in the ultimate triumph of goodness.

4. Religion is thus based essentially on faith in man, and the situations which tend to make us despair of man present the most typical problems of religion.

The modern Job's complaints are not addressed directly to God; they are relayed to him by way of man. Thus, all situations which seem to destroy our faith

in man, give rise to religion as a cut in the flesh to the healing skin. Of these, wrongs suffered by a historical or social group present the most profound challenge to religion, since the sense of frustration of a group is far more easily universalized into a world concept than that of a single person. Group life gives birth to special religious problems.

5. The mere conscious identification of oneself with the Jewish people arouses an essentially religious problem. The state of mind of the "Hitler-proselytes" is really the birth throes of religion. A cursory knowledge of Jewish history coupled with a personal realization of not being judged on his merits brings the Jew face to face with the incorrigible knavery of human nature, which even dares at times to elevate hate into a noble principle. The consciousness of other Jews the world over, suffering the same fate, helps to generalize this feeling into a thorough disgust with the goodness of humanity, a total loss of faith in mankind—a feeling which is the starting point of religion.

The intensity of a Jew's religious interests thus, other characteristics being equal, varies directly with the profoundity of his sympathy with his people's plight.

If this analysis is correct, then the concept of Judaism as a religion is the only relevant one for the revitalization of Jewish life. This concept, though age-old, still holds forth a ringing challenge to modern Jewish thought.

The acceptance of this challenge must result in a deepening of religious thought and will inevitably redound to the benefit of the whole world.

In Reply to Rabbi Agushewitz

By Mordecai M. Kaplan

RABBI Agushewitz's critique of the theory of Judaism as a civilization differs significantly from much of the criticism to which this idea has been subjected. He offers a welcome addition to the discussion of the subject. His criticism of the idea of Judaism as a civilization rests not on the ground that the idea is fallacious, or that it is destructive of traditional values which should be preserved, but on the ground that it is inadequate. His contention is that it offers no sufficient motivation to seek a Jewish life for the assimilationist Jew, who has been disillusioned as to the possibility of assimilation. He formulates in the following words the attitude of the ex-assimilationist who would like to become a *baal-t'shuva* but is inhibited by psychological difficulties: "Help me, if you can, to answer in terms of my own sense of duty and values, why I should be a Jew. Your program, though inwardly consistent, does not evoke within me a sense of duty for the continuation of Jewish life." He also says: "Thus, while it is true that Judaism may be defined as an all-inclusive civilization, we do not gain from that intellectual feat any further insight into the most crucial problem of modern Judaism, to wit, the proof of its indispensability in the life of a modern Jew."

The only answer one can give to arguments such as these is that they set up an unreasonable sort of pragmatic test for the validity of any theory of Jewish life. *The true pragmatic test of an ideal is not the facility with which people are persuaded to accept it, but what it does to their lives once they do accept it.* Undoubtedly it is difficult for a man who has deliberately, or even inadvertently, pursued a policy of flight from Judaism to reverse himself and cultivate positively Jewish habits. But the act of *t'shuva* always involves such a redirection of the will and a repudiation of what has until then been "one's own sense of duty and value."

The prospective *baal t'shuva* who asks

to be accepted on condition that his acceptance involve no change in the standard of values that is to govern his behavior is presumptuous indeed. It may be true that the sincere penitent attains a higher spiritual station than the man who has never sinned; this does not mean that the prospective penitent may demand that he be assured of that station prior to any change in his way of life, indicative of a penitential attitude. But is not this, in effect, what Rabbi Agushewitz, speaking in behalf of the "Hitler-proselytes," is demanding? He expects that mere intellectual assent to the theory of Judaism as a civilization shall afford to the quondam assimilationist satisfactions which the Jew who has remained loyal to Jewish civilization has experienced only by loyally living a Jewish life. Such expectations we cannot satisfy. Much as we may sympathize with the spiritual torments of the Jew who is compelled to be identified with the Jewish people but is unwilling to accept the ethical implication of such identification and the loyalties inherent in it, we can do nothing to help him, if he will not help himself.

My answer, then, to the words that Rabbi Agushewitz puts in the mouth of the hypothetical ex-assimilationist who is seeking a new adjustment to Jewish life, would be as follows: "We hold the door of the spiritual home in which you belong open to you, but your entering must be an act of your own will. We can assure you of a hospitable welcome to our board, but we cannot promise that you will like our fare before you taste it, since we ourselves have found it good only by tasting it." If he rejects this invitation, if he chooses to stay forever in the No-Man's Land of the spiritually *homeless* we sincerely deplore his fate, for we know and we have warned him of the agonizing experiences in store for him. But we cannot force upon him against his will the only salvation that is open to him.

The unreasonableness of Rabbi Agushewitz's attitude can best be illustrated by reference to an analogy which has been frequently used by Israel's prophets in describing the people's relation to its God. They regarded Israel as wedded to God but as frequently going astray after false gods. Her lovers, however, prove unfaithful to her and cheat her expectations. Deserted by them she returns to her husband and is accepted with forgiveness. Now let me ask: Would it be reasonable for a woman who was unfaithful to her husband and abandoned him for another, only to be forsaken in turn by her paramour, to come to her husband and say: "Before I return to you, can you assure me that you will make yourself as attractive to me as was my lover for whom I left you?" Would not a more humble attitude be far more appropriate and more natural under the circumstances, one that would inquire how the penitent could come in time to merit the sense of security and status that her acceptance would afford her?

Or let us examine Rabbi Agushewitz's critique from another angle. He completely ignores the fact that *the satisfactions which Jewish civilization affords must be experienced in order to be appreciated.* He expects us to offer the "Hitler-proselytes" a theory of Judaism, which will not only convince them *a priori* that these satisfactions are within their reach, but that Judaism is actually indispensable to their very life and that its values are, in a sense, their own creation. We cannot prove that Judaism is *indispensable* to life. Judaism belongs to the higher interests of life and it is possible to dispense with all these higher interests and still live some sort of life. Very many criminals manage to do so quite consistently. It is hard to understand just what Rabbi Agushewitz means by calling Judaism indispensable to life, unless he means indispensable to Jewish survival, which is, of course a tautological begging of the question.

The values of Jewish civilization, like all the higher values of life can be appreciated only through cultivation. It is absurd to expect a person without a musi-

cal education to listen to a symphony of Beethoven and experience its beauty as in any sense his own creation. Why then should we expect him, for example, to attend a Jewish religious service and feel toward the liturgy of the synagogue as if it were his own creation? Before he can feel it as such, he must have had some past experience of the way the God idea manifests itself in Jewish life, some knowledge of the meaning of all the historical and literary allusions of the liturgy, some sympathy with the hopes and aspirations for Israel's future based on cooperation with his fellow-Jews. Even the Jew who has never trodded the path of assimilation is cautioned not to regard the Torah as a hereditary privilege but as a good to be acquired by personal effort. "Qualify thyself for the study of the Torah," says Rabbi Jose, "since the knowledge of it is not an inheritance of thine." We may admire the sublime patience of Hillel in not dismissing summarily the heathen who wanted to be converted to Judaism while standing on one foot, but we must remember that, although Hillel answered by his celebrated golden rule, he added the words, "Now go and learn." He did not expect the heathen without preliminary training to experience the values of Judaism as if they had been his own.

And what does Rabbi Agushewitz propose as a more adequate answer to the Hitler-proselytes? He concedes that they "cannot agree with those who base Jewish life primarily on the acceptance of definite creeds or on the belief in a revealed code." Yet, when he tries himself to answer the questions that he has propounded, all he can offer is "a revitalization and redirection of the old motive" which he identifies with the sense of religious responsibility. Now if Jewish religion is not to be identified with a specific creed or a specific code, what meaning can it have except as function of an evolving Jewish life indissolubly bound up with Jewish group sancta? Far be it from me to deprecate the emphasis that Rabbi Agushewitz places on Jewish religion. But if Jewish religion needs to be revitalized and redirected, the only way that this can be accomplished is by giving it an organism through which it can function, that is by restoring to functional activity every aspect of Jewish civilization and preserving their organic relations to one another. Jewish religion is indeed the choice fruit of Jewish civilization, but Rabbi Agushewitz should understand that the fruit can be preserved only by nourishing the life of the tree.

Revelation of God in Nature

A Piyut for the First Benediction of the Evening Prayer.

Reader

Our fathers acclaimed the God
Whose handiwork they read
In the mysterious heavens above
And in the varied scene of earth below,
In the orderly march of days and nights,
Of seasons and years,
And in the chequered fate of man.

Meantime have the vaulting skies dissolved;
Night reveals the limitless caverns of space,
Hidden by the light of day,
And unfolds horizonless vistas
Far beyond imagination's ken.

The mind is staggered,
Yet soon regains its poise,
And peering through the boundless dark,
Orients itself anew
By the light of distant suns
Shrunk to glittering sparks.
The soul is faint,
Yet soon revives,
And learns to spell once more the name of God
Across the newly visioned firmament.

Congregation

"Lift your eyes, look up;
Who made these stars?
He who marshals them in order
Summoning each one by name." (Is. 40, 26)

Reader

God is the oneness
That spans the fathomless deeps of space
And the measureless eons of time,
Binding them together in act,
As we do in thought.

He is the sameness
In the elemental substance of stars and planets,
Of this our earthly abode
And all the things that live therein.

He is the unity
Of all that is,
The uniformity of all that moves,
The rhythm of each thing,
And the nature of their interaction.

Congregation

"He binds up the Pleiades in a cluster
And loosens the chains of Orion;
He directs the signs of the Zodiac
And guides the constellations of the Bear."
(Based on Job, 39, 31-32)

Reader

God is the mystery of life,
Enkindling inert matter
With inner drive and purpose.

He is the creative flame
That transfigures lifeless substance,
Leaping into ever higher realms of being,
Brightening into the radiant glow of feeling,
Till it turn into the white fire of thought.

And though no sign of living thing
Break the eternal silence of the spheres,
We cannot deem this earth,
This tiny speck in the infinitude
Alone instinct with God.

By that token
Which unites the worlds in bonds of matter
Are all the worlds bound
In the bond of Life.

Congregation

"It is He who forms the mountains
And creates the wind
And reveals His inner mind to man;
He who makes the dawn and darkness
Who marches over the heights of earth.
His name is the Eternal." (Amos 4, 13)

Reader

God is in the faith
By which we overcome
The fear of loneliness, of helplessness,
Of failure and of death.

God is in the hope
Which, like a shaft of light,
Cleaves the dark abysms
Of sin, of suffering, and of despair.

God is in the love
Which creates, protects, forgives.
His the spirit
Which broods upon the chaos men have wrought,
Disturbing its static wrongs,
And stirring into life the formless beginnings
Of the new and better world.

Congregation

"Thou art my portion,
O Eternal;
Thou art my share.
Thou wilt show me the path of life.
Fullness of joy is in Thy presence.
Everlasting happiness dost Thou provide. (Ps. 16, 5, 11)

M. M. K.

The State and The Jew

By Julia Pinkus

THE title of Laski's book* is highly significant. Consideration of the state both as it should be and as it actually is marks a new era in the realm of political philosophy. Formerly, political philosophy concerned itself mainly with abstract theories of the character of the state; it did not consider the practical working out of the theories to be within its province. In the natural sciences, we have learned to be guided by the motto, "If a fact doesn't fit a theory, throw out the theory." That we have not attained that level in the social sciences is too apparent. As Laski points out, "The postulates of any social theory are, in fact, value judgments born of the experience of the individual thinker who makes them." What test then as to their validity? Most people would agree that the object of the state is to fulfill in as wide a measure as possible the desires of its citizens. Today they would likewise recognize that although the potentialities are the greatest in history, men's desires are by no means being fulfilled to the maximum degree possible. In the reasons for such anomaly lies the real variance of opinion.

To the adherents of capitalism, the fact that industrial crises recur, that twelve million people are unemployed in the richest country in the world, bears no relation to the tenets of the capitalistic state as such. To the dissenters from the premises of capitalism, its theoretic basis must stand the pragmatic test of actuality. That the capitalistic order has brought such disaster leads these dissenters to attack its roots. In the last analysis, quoting Laski, "A state is what its government does." With such a viewpoint, he proceeds to break down many of our cherished traditions, as he probes to the core of their meaning. Removing the garnish from the noble concept of the "rights of man," he analyzes its actual meanings, namely, the rights of the class owning the means of production. And the liberal tradition in general is merely a way of justifying the transference of political authority from the landowner to the commercial middle class.

Laski shows that there is no *a priori* connection between law and justice, for the law is frequently made by one body of men to be applied to another body of men with different purposes. In the modern state particularly, law is not made by the great mass of people, but by the few who assume that their conviction of its necessity will be shared by the rest of the population. How true, that "men think differently who live differently," and Laski states that the weakness of classical political philosophies is their failure to pay serious attention to the fact that inequality ruined great empires in the past. He feels that only in an understanding of the dominating influence of the property relation in determining the purposes of the state can an adequate theory of political obligation be found.

In discussing the state and government in the real world, he starts out with the premise that the basic factor in any society lies in its method of earning its living, and that all social relations are built upon this. It is the Marxian point of view which Laski so excellently represents, that the economic factor is the predominant one in social change, and that the nature and importance of all other factors in a society are determined, however indirectly, by the character of economic relationships. He very definitely points out, however, that history is meaningless when viewed as a struggle between competing selfish interests; it must rather be regarded as the competition of ideals for survival, the character of which ideals is determined by their power to exploit the potentialities of a productive system

*"The State In Theory and Practice," Viking Press, New York, 1935.

at a particular time. This point will be further developed in the discussion of Jewish life and adjustment.

II

The state's primary function is to ensure the peaceful process of production in its society. In a society where the relation of its groups to the productive process is fundamentally different, conflict arises when a change in social relationships is claimed by the class recognizing its potential well-being as being denied because of the very system of class relations. The position of the state in the struggle for dominance cannot be mental, says Laski, for the state by its very nature is the legal instrument and coercive power to protect the existing method of economic relationships from being interfered with in the interests of the non-owning class.

In Laski's analysis of the relationship between capitalism and democracy, he states that the connection between them has been an accident of history, democracy being the price paid by capital for the alliance of labor to overthrow feudalism. When capitalism was wealthy and expanding, it could be tolerant, offer concessions to the masses, extend political democracy as palliative to the fundamental antagonism between the interests of capital and labor. In a period of contraction, however, when the antagonism of interests becomes increasingly apparent, when the capitalist class is faced with bankruptcy and the masses bestir themselves to attack the very postulates of a capitalist system, no guarantee is given that democracy will be maintained even at the cost of capitalism itself. In crisis, therefore, as Laski points out, plutocracy no longer finds the democratic mask suitable to its interests. We must recognize that the state with its coercive power is used as the barrier against the abolition of classes, since it is always the servant of the owning or capitalist class. It follows that the state can only act for the total well-being of a society when the means of production are commonly owned.

In carrying over the idea of state sovereignty into the international field, the logical conclusion is that the capitalistic state must use force to protect its interests abroad as it does at home. In the last resort, then, war is inevitable under capitalism, the League of Nations notwithstanding.

Laski may be accused of repetition of points, but his observations are so significant that it is highly important to reread his line of argument for full comprehension. And what our generation, or those of us who thus far concur in the author's approach, are most interested in are his conclusions as to the outlook for our generation, our part in the coming struggle for power.

He points out that throughout history, any class seeking to redefine its position fundamentally has done so by violent means. He reminds us that no doctrine, however evil, moves to the use of force, unless it is rooted in a profound grievance which it sees no other way to remedy. "The very fact that men ordinarily accustomed to obey, deviate from the norm is indicative of grave disease in the state." However, such probability of revolution does not necessarily (especially in a modern state) imply victory for the party striving for a classless society. Laski considers it essential, therefore, that a revolutionary party maintain as long as possible a constitutional order which permits it openly to recruit its strength; the alternative is an underground movement. The delicacy and difficulty involved in fundamental social change he does not by any means minimize.

It is on a courageous note that Laski concludes when he states that today political philosophy, instead of justifying the past, must examine the basis of incompatibility between the sovereign state and the economic order required for our greatest possible fulfillment. In so doing the modern capitalistic state is revealed as the "guardian of class relations, depriving us

of a richer civilization that might be ours."

III

Now then, with the author's point of view in mind, we can consider the problem of Jewish life and adjustment by examining more minutely what capitalism and particularly capitalism-in-crisis, has meant to Jewish life. Following the Marxist way of reasoning, let us view Jewish life and adjustment as it is, and as it should be. That today in Germany, to use but one hideous example, Jews are scarcely allowed to live, no less to adjust their particular way of living, is the tragic reality we must face. And in this example, extreme if you will, the position of the Jews under capitalism-in-crisis bears out too well the Marxist prediction. There is no error, says Laski, that men have not been able to persuade themselves was truth, when it was not in their interests to do so. And in Germany we of this generation have the privilege of seeing a capitalistic class in the throes of economic difficulty, using the coercive power of the state to any lengths, in the effort to preserve itself. One wonders, with regard to German capitalism gone mad, whether any previous manner of Jewish life and adjustment would have made the slightest difference to the Nazi reign of terror. In answer to the criticism that anti-Semitism is not a wholly economic phenomenon, Laski definitely states that historical materialists have never contended that the economic factor is the only one; but they do say that the economic factor defines the fundamental necessity within the framework of which all other ideas will be selected as significant. In Germany, the rabid anti-Semitism might have remained an "ideological eccentricity" if the capitalist interests were not in a position to use the forces of the state to compel acceptance of that phenomenon. One can only compare the relative experiences of Germany and Russia since the Soviets came into being to note the influence of the state with regard to anti-Semitism. In the Soviet Union, the state has exercised its power to the extent that anti-Semitic outbreaks are considered as crimes against the state. That is not to say that anti-Semitism has completely disappeared. The habit of centuries does not die out immediately. However, with the forces of the state thrown against ignorance and prejudice toward minorities, with the attention of the people focused on building a new life, hatred for the Jew is succumbing to a natural death. In Germany, on the other hand, the holders of economic privilege have exploited ignorance, passion, prejudice to maintain their benefits, with the result that the Jews in Germany are being reduced to the status of an enslaved people. In Poland, their situation bids fair to becoming even worse. It would seem that in any country where Jews offer serious rivalry to economic competition and ambition, they must bear the consequences that a capitalist class is prepared to offer. Where must one turn, then if one would preserve Jewish life?

Can the problem of Jewish life and adjustment be solved of itself or must we recognize that the right to live as a people is dependent on the right of all peoples to obtain the fullest that our civilization has to offer? In subscribing to the latter thesis, I believe that Jewish existence in the modern world must depend on the ethic of the society of which it forms a part, and no change in the character of that ethic, as Laski says, will take place without change in the economic postulates of the civilization. Recognizing what the ethic has necessarily been under capitalism and realizing that he will continue to be used as one of the scapegoats of fascism because of the heritage of prejudice fostered under capitalism, the Jew must be ready to align himself against fascist forces. At the same time, it is not incompatible that he lend his effort to the constructive elements in his group life in order that he may perpetuate that part of his Jewish culture that will enrich civilization and make for full living under a socialistic state.